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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 002165

SIPDIS

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TAGS: CH PREL TW ESTH

SUBJECT: TAIWAN MOFA CRITICISES PRC POSITION AT WHA

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal. Reasons 1.5 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Victor Chin, Director General of North American Affairs Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, forwarded to AIT late on May 12 a press release in Chinese that, he said, had been issued earlier in the day.

¶2. (C) The press release responds to the PRC diplomatic note that has been circulated and apparently made public in Geneva. Much of the press release recites familiar and often valid complaints by the Taiwan side concerning PRC refusal to allow Taiwan observer status at the WHA, the treatment of the delegation at the recent WHO meeting in Bangkok on public health issues in the wake of the December 26 Tsunami, and the WHO refusal to accredit Taiwan reporters.

¶3. (C) The last portion of the press release addresses the specifics of the package that has been worked out to enable Taiwan to participate in the International Health Regulations. It states that Taiwan cannot accept the use of the term "Taiwan, China" in the MOU that the PRC plans to sign with the WHO Secretariat. It also insists that it is unreasonable for the WHO to notify the PRC representative office in Geneva before engaging in cooperation with Taiwan under the IHR. The press release concludes by stating that Taiwan has already communicated officially to the WHO that it would be impossible for Taiwan to accept any arrangement that diminishes Taiwan's status.

¶4. (C) AIT Deputy Director (DDIR) discussed this release with Chin by phone later Thursday evening. DDIR pointed out that both the MOU and the agreement to notify the PRC, without seeking consent, were integral parts of the four-part package that had been worked out after considerable effort by U.S. negotiators and in full consultation with Taiwan counterparts. He also noted that the MOU language would not be a public document, and that it would be hardly surprising if a UN organization and a UN member used UN terminology to refer to Taiwan, however much Taiwan might disagree with that terminology. Chin said that he believed that everyone in MOFA understood the points DDIR had made, but they felt a requirement to demonstrate to their domestic political audience that they were fighting for Taiwan's dignity. Chin did concede however that Minister Mark Chen has been very categorical in recent MOFA meetings in insisting that the IHR agreement must incorporate language fully respectful of Taiwan. DDIR urged Chin to convey to the Minister our concerns and said that AIT would be prepared to meet with MOFA and with the Minister to discuss this further if it would be useful.

¶5. (C) Chin promised to convey our point of view and to extend our offer to the Minister. He said that he had some hope that the Minister might be trying to express a hard line for domestic political consumption, knowing that it would be necessary to be more flexible in moving forward on the IHR agreement.

¶6. (C) Comment. While Victor Chin has been a valuable and reliable interlocutor and we share his hopes, we would also note that Minister Chen has frequently shown a willingness in recent months to appeal to Taiwan domestic political audiences and Taiwan pride even when that strains external relations and international initiatives to the breaking point.
PAAL